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Canada; an address delivered
of July, 1889 ...

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CANADA.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON THE 1ST OF JULY, 1889,

BY

M. A. J. O'Sullivan, M.A. LL.B.

OF TORONTO, BARRISTER-AT-LAW,

IN AID OF THE

HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE, DUNDAS.

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C A N A D A .

ADDRESS DELIVERED ON DOMINION DAY AT DUNDAS IN AID OF THE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE.

The Very Reverend Father Heenan in the Chair.

Dr. O'Sullivan said :

VERY REVEREND CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN :

An address on this anniversary of our Dominion is not, in my view, as customary as it should have been, and not as customary as I hope it shall be. It would occur but once a year and ought not to bear too hardly on the nerves and patience of the public. It need not compete with the rhetoric of the 4th of July oration delivered in the western parts of the United States, but it might and could be brought into requisition for the benefit of the rising generation. In the neighboring republic the great people of that country are annually brought to a remembrance of their

independence, not only by a display of fireworks and by military evolutions, but by what is more enduring: by a spirited and patriotic address delivered by some competent public man. Have we in this country no remembrances of the rise, the independence I may say, of this great Dominion? And have we nothing to say to the young generation of Canadians about their own land? Though I am not a public man and have little or no claims to be heard on a public platform, I am a Canadian: I have been born and educated in this country, I make my living in this country as honest, I hope, as a lawyer can make it. I expect to die in this country, and I feel that whatever talent I possess should be at the disposal first of all of my own fellow-countrymen. And so it was a pleasure to me to be invited here to-day to talk about Canada, a country to which I am proud to say in the spare moments of my professional life I have devoted considerable time in studying her constitution and her political and ecclesiastical history. I shall not trouble you to-day with any ecclesiastical history, but I will advert for a moment to what I have already said, that in this anniversary of the Dominion we might almost be said to commemorate the independence of this country.

The Constitution.

By this I do not by any means ignore the relations that we have with the Mother Country, as a subordinate part of the British Empire—relations which, in the present condition of things, I hope will ever continue—but I mean that independence of action, that freedom in self-government which Great Britain now allows to Canada. A hundred years ago this country was in the position of a crown colony, or perhaps lower in the scale of self-government; in 1791, when the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada were created, we were but little better off. After half a century misgovernment under an imperfect constitution drove the people to rebellion; in 1840, when the Canadas were united, there came responsible government—a greater freedom in the management of our own affairs—a step in the direction of that almost complete independence which was effected in 1867 by the foundation of this great Dominion. Well might the Canadian Minister of Justice in 1874 write to the Earl of Carnarvon that “Canada is not merely a colony or a province, she is a Dominion composed of an aggregate of seven large provinces federally united under one Imperial charter which expressly recites that the

constitution is to be similar to that of the United Kingdom." Nay, more, he says, "Besides the power with which she is invested over a large part of the affairs of the inhabitants of the several provinces she enjoys absolute power of legislation and administration over the people and territories of the N.W., out of which she has already created one province and is empowered to create others with representative institutions." And so the Dominion began with 4 provinces in 1867 and to-day it embraces half the continent. When the United States declared its Independence in 1776 it included only 13 States, not all the territory lying east of the Mississippi—and it was a long time and encountered great trouble and expense before it stretched itself across to the Pacific. It has done wonders in this century of wonders; but we are not a century old or one-quarter of it, we are only emerging from childhood, having done no more than attain our twenty-second year. This western continent has great possibilities, and who knows what the Dominion may not be when it has reached its hundredth year! We have no serious disadvantages in our form of government, we are perhaps legislated for too much, but we need not be misgoverned. We have perhaps the very best constitution in

the world, and it is our own fault if we are not governed to our own satisfaction. We are practically an independent people in nearly everything that concerns our domestic affairs we are constitutionally free in everything except international affairs and some few matters in which Great Britain has interests equal to or larger than our own. People are apt to undervalue the blessings of good government, having enough to do to make a living without troubling themselves over it, but one need only turn to the struggle going on in Ireland to reflect that if one half the misery and discontent caused there is due to bad government then bad government must be a very bad thing indeed.

The Country to Earn One's Living In.

Now this question of making a living is a very serious personal one and the best of all governments unfortunately does not supply those under it with clothing and three meals a day. It supplies, no doubt, a good many, but these are the favored politicians. We can not all hope to be fed at the public crib. I believe it is true as a general proposition in social economy that there is not a man on the face of the earth but, with the aid of his head or of his two hands, can make a fair living. It

is a provision of nature to be self-supporting whether he lives lazily on a bunch of grapes and a glass of water in the sunshine of Italy or laboriously supports himself in the northern countries. No healthy man need starve. He can do more; he can lay by and give to those who are unable to work. The poor who can work, if work is to be had, are no objects of charity. We have some of them in this country but we have no need for them. Every man in Canada can make an honest living. There is land enough for every one—there is fuel, there is a healthy climate. We are not oppressed by the sirocco of the desert nor overwhelmed by the cyclone of the prairies. And so another great advantage is in this country not to be so readily had elsewhere, and that is a fair competence is within the reach of all. One is not ground by Government taxes nor ruined by State impositions. One hasn't to fight the wind and weather, though I admit there will be the usual wail this year about the destruction of peaches, and it is likely the farmers will not find the rainfall to their satisfaction. This subject of weather, though quite a blessing as an aid to conversation, is perhaps about the only thing we can seriously grumble at. In Scotland, you know, it rains nearly all the time and snows

for the balance, and I think we should require one week of their so-called fine weather to be satisfied with our own in this country.

FREEDOM IN RELIGION AND IN EDUCATION.

There are other special advantages in this country. We do not persecute for conscience sake on matters of religion, we do not impose on our neighbor our own theories in matters of education. I couple these two delicate subjects together because I do not understand how or why they can be separated. I abhor any system of so-called education which leaves out of view the moral training of one's child. It is unchristian—it is pagan. One might as well be brought up as were the children in Greece under Plato and Aristotle thousands of years ago upon the speculations of the schools, as to be brought up now in this Christian land with no religious instruction and with no more training in morals than is to be found in the platitudes of some book on elocution. I say there can be no true education that is not based upon religion, and I say that the denomination or church that abandons that part of education virtually admits the uselessness of its own teaching. In this mixed country, where everyone is devoted to his own faith, it is impossible that the state could please everyone in en-

deavoring to impart religious instruction. But the law of the land is not to blame for that. The law of this province in that respect is a credit to Christianity and to modern civilization. It is valued recognition of denominational training. It says in effect: The state will do the best it can and all it can in educational matters. It provides a public school system free to everyone, but it will not undertake to impart any special religious instruction to those who attend it. As some persons may not like their children educated in that way, it further says, we will meet their views. We will establish schools to meet that want, and the government looking around divided the religious denominations into two great bodies, the Protestants and Catholics, and established separate schools for these great bodies, that was supposed to include all the people—the others can be left out of the reckoning. The religion of Jews is not a recognized part of the law of the land and the affectations of disbelief on the part of the agnostic need not be seriously regarded. The Catholics have generally availed themselves of the legislation I refer to—the Protestants not so, and in only half a dozen places. I respect those Protestants who do not establish schools for themselves but I do not agree with them. The law

of the land allows them a privilege of which generally they do not take advantage ; but I would not think more of complaining of that —it being no part of my business as a Catholic —than it is any part of their business as Protestants to complain of the opposite course which I pursue. The complete equality upon which our school system is based is, I maintain, a very great recommendation to the young Canadian, and I need scarcely say that the plane upon which all religious bodies move bears exactly the same relation towards the state. This is a mixed community ; it is neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a collection of both. I know of no power that controls any one denomination, and I recognize no right in either Catholic or Protestant to domineer one over the other. We sometimes hear it foolishly said that one body or individual will give fairplay or equal rights to his neighbor. All I can say is that the neighbor has equal rights in spite of such an assertion, and will maintain them without his let or hindrance. No private gentleman nor public official nor premier nor royal representative has more liberties to retain or to give away than are already possessed by the general public.

Public and Private Charity.

In this great country, and especially in this magnificent province, we have all those advantages of good laws, of freedom in matters of religion and education, of splendidly equipped schools in professional life, and a fair field for every man to earn his own livelihood honestly. We have more. We have for those unable to earn their own livelihood a system of public charity encouraged by the state, which is one of the chief features of Canadian liberality. The deserving poor, the poor unable to maintain themselves, the poor that from one cause or another have ceased to be self-supporting, we of course have, as we will have to the end of time; but by a network of charities partly municipal and partly religious or denominational, the deserving poor are, or can be generally relieved, though as often happens the undeserving poor sometimes come in for the share of the other. In the city of Toronto alone we have upwards of thirty different organizations whose end and aim are the alleviation of suffering and the succor of the distressed. In our hospitals and homes and visiting committees a great and good work is being carried on, and although our Queen City is at times regarded as being a very bigoted and intolerant place I venture to say this public charity

is carried on with no discrimination against any denomination or against any form of belief or unbelief. I have the honor to belong to a considerable number of boards and of charitable organizations, and I am free to say that any attempt made to question a man's faith is not made as a condition to relieving his stomach. Fully one-third of all the indoor poor in this city of Toronto is relieved, cared for, nursed, attended to, by the Sisters of Charity, and though these may be largely of one denomination, no man is refused admittance to these wards or denied their shelter. In proof of this the City Council gives liberally to these sisters, the Provincial Government deals them out their allowance in the same way—and it is a liberal way—as it does to the other charities, and lastly the great wealthy and charitable Protestant public of our city deals most generously with them. It is a nice question in every system of alms giving how far you are relieving the poor and how far you are encouraging pauperism, but the business man in his hurry has no time to weigh these delicate questions. He gives not with the judgment of a political economist, and gives perhaps recklessly, yet he gives with the assurance that some one is worse off than himself and may be relieved out of his abundance. The charity

that you are encouraging to-day by your presence and contributions is I am sure conducted on the same liberal basis and is entitled to the same unselfish support.

The Future of Canada—Imperial Federation.

I hope that the Canada of to-day, with its constitution, its educational and charitable systems will long continue in its present condition. We have lived under five or six different forms of government within the past 100 years—we ought to take a rest now. There have been only 16 or so amendments to the constitution of the United States since it was framed in 1789, and these amendments do not cover one page of an ordinary book. Within that period we have been experimenting with constitutions and it is to be hoped that we have now settled down on one that in the opinion of able men is superior to the American form of government. People who talk of smashing Confederation do not talk for their country's good. They are like disappointed suitors in a court of law—they want the law changed to suit their own individual cases. No honest, patriotic man wants Confederation smashed, and there is ample freedom under its provisions for this country to become a great prosperous country. The tie, slender as it may be, that binds us

to Great Britain is not a restraint sufficient to check, much less is it a tie sufficient to strangle, us. It may be, we know not how great protection it is against our being absorbed by the great neighbor to the south of us. For my part I can leave to speculators and enthusiasts dreams of independence or annexation. I hold to the present position of Canada as an integral part of a great empire, and I hope that the only change in the future, if change must come, will be a move in the direction of closer relations with the other colonies of the empire. If Canada cannot stand alone I hope she will join hands with the other colonies of the empire and form an imperial federation. There is, I believe, no other course open to her, unless she learns to content herself with the present form of government.

The National Life.

The future of Canada is in the hands of the present generation, whether in those of the public men that we now have, or with the public men that are being trained now for the future. It has been well said that a nation is whatever its best public men are. The public men of to-day are largely the product of the past, and whatever they are we cannot be fairly said to be responsible

for them. They were trained in other times and under other influences and perhaps compared with the future they may rank as a race of giants. The men of the future are within the scope and influence of the present life, and the present must be held largely responsible for them. When one looks around and compares the influences of to-day with those of the last generation there is certainly an alteration noticeable. We make more money and spend more than used to be the case; we all seek for the town and city life in preference to the quiet life in the country. the rush for higher education and professional life and the avoidance of trades and the life of the artisan are features, are the aims of our young men. I could wish that there were nothing to complain of, but there are tendencies in our Canadian life borrowed from other nations, customs that are not entirely for the good. For instance it would indicate a better spirit if the youth of the country took part in healthy games instead of paying professional gentlemen to play games for them. I tell you that there is more money drawn out of Toronto in the summer season to go to the support of a good for nothing class than would support the poor of the city or the whole year. We have a large number

of the good for nothing class that were unknown a generation ago. I would rather see the young Canadian content to be a very passable amateur taking part in our games and amusements than paying 25 and 50 cents to be a spectator. And the loss of money and of time and of proper companions and of proper places are not the only losses. There is the loss of energy, the loss of determination, the loss of ambition to win, which is necessary to every public man, and which is learned and matured in the cricket and lacrosse field or in the race course, just as surely as it is in the public platform or the public debate. I deplore the direction which has unfortunately been given to our games in Canada. I feel that they form no unimportant part of a nation's outfit and that encouragement given to them is encouragement in the right direction. I believe that we should be our own players and that it is a bad sign when we have to pay for the witnessing of games, games in which we ourselves should be the actors. I believe that there was a proportionate thoroughness in the homely education of earlier years in the province. The object of study now-a-days seems to be less a desire to get a good mental and moral training than it is a desire to pass certain examinations. There were magni-

ficient men in former times that might be puzzled over the "ologies" of to-day, but they were hard opponents in a contest and the right sort of men when there was anything to be said or done of practical every-day life. I hope that in many respects the rising generations will equal them. I hope they will copy their virtues and avoid their faults, and that they will make as respectable a figure in life as their fathers have made before them.

At the conclusion of the address a vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Bain, M.P., and seconded by Mr. Watson, in patriotic speeches, to which a suitable reply was given, and after three cheers were given for the Queen the audience dispersed.

1. A. 21. 1900

